

Appln. No. 10/688,620

Amendment dated February 22, 2005

Reply to Office Action mailed September 22, 2004

Amendments to the Drawings

The attached four sheets of drawings include changes to Figs. 2, 3, 6, and 7. These four sheets, which include Figs. 2, 3, 6, and 7, replace the original sheets including Fig. 2, 3, 6, and 7

Attachment: Four Replacement Sheets

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REMARKS

Reconsideration is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3 through 7, 10 through 12, 14 through 17, and 20 remain in this application. Claims 2, 8, 9, 13, 18 and 19 have been cancelled. No claims have been withdrawn. Claims 21 through 23 have been added.

The Examiner's rejections will be considered in the order of their occurrence in the Office Action.

Paragraph 1 of the Office Action

The drawings have been objected to.

Submitted with this amendment are replacement drawings for Figures 2, 3, 6, and 7. Specifically, in Figure 2, reference number "60" has been changed to "50", and in Figures 3, 6, and 7, the shape of the locking slot "38" has been clarified such that locking of the locking tabs "35" into the locking slots "38" is clearly permitted.

Also, an amendment of the "Brief Description of the Drawings" has been made in the specification to clarify the matters raised in paragraph 1(c) of the Office Action.

In light of the proposed drawing amendment, it is therefore submitted that the objection to the drawings as originally filed has been overcome, and withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is respectfully requested.

Paragraph 2 of the Office Action

The specification has been objected to for the informalities noted in the Office Action.

The specification has been amended in a manner believed to clarify the mistaken reference number, and the "Brief Description of the Drawings"

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has also been amended in a manner submitted to overcome the concerns set forth in the Office Action.

Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Paragraph 3 of the Office Action

Claims 1 through 19 have been objected to for the informalities noted in the Office Action.

Claims 1, 4, 6, 14, 15, 16 and 20 have been amended in a manner consistent with the suggestions in the Office Action.

Withdrawal of the objection to claims 1 through 19 is therefore respectfully requested.

Paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Office Action

Claims 13, 14, 19 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112 (first paragraph) as containing subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to enable one skilled in the art to make and/or use the invention.

Claims 13 and 19 have been cancelled, and claims 14 and 20 have been amended to remove the subject matter referenced in the Office Action.

Withdrawal of the §112 (first paragraph) rejection of claims 14 and 20 is respectfully requested.

Paragraphs 6 through 12 of the Office Action

Claims 1 through 6, 8, 10 and 12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. 2002/0141812 to Edelen et al.

Claims 7, 11, 13, 15 through 17, and 19 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Edelen et al.

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Claim 9 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Edelen et al. in view of U.S. 6,494,636 to Mozena.

Claim 14 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Edelen et al. in view of U.S. 6,494,636 to Mozena.

Claims 18 and 20 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over Edelen et al. as applied to claims 7, 11, 13, 15-17 and 19 above and further in view of U.S. 6,494,636 to Mozena.

Claims 1, 14, and 15 each require, particularly as amended, the following:

wherein each one of said plurality of sleeve assemblies further comprises:

an upper sleeve member positionable to abut a top edge of said relatively lower one of said segments; and

a lower sleeve member positionable to abut a lower edge of said relatively higher one of said segments;

wherein said upper sleeve member and said lower sleeve member are configured to selectively engage each other such that said lower sleeve member is capable of being maintained in a static position relative to said upper sleeve member, a locking slot being defined on said upper sleeve member at position in a lower portion of a perimeter wall, a locking tab being defined on said lower sleeve member and extending from an upper portion of a perimeter wall, said lower sleeve member having a central longitudinal axis, a reference plane extending perpendicular to said central longitudinal axis;

wherein said locking slot is defined by a slot edge of said perimeter wall, said slot edge extending at an inclined angle with respect to said reference plane, and wherein said locking tab is defined by a tab edge of said perimeter wall, said tab edge extending at said inclined angle with respect to said reference plane such that rotating said upper sleeve member with respect to said lower sleeve member in a first direction engages said locking tab into said locking slot and rotating said upper sleeve member with respect to said lower sleeve member in a second direction disengages said locking tab from said locking slot.

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The shape of the tab edge and slot edge and the inclined angle set forth in the amended language permits the tab and slot to be more easily aligned and engaged with each other, and does not require an exact alignment of the tab with the slot.

It is submitted that the patents and publication cited in the Office Action, and particularly the Edelen and Mozena documents, would lead one of ordinary skill in the art to the requirements of claims 1, 14, and 15. It is noted that the Mozena patent shows a "vertical key reception slot" that includes sides that are oriented perpendicularly to the bottom edge of the outer key sleeve 52, and is also oriented at an angle of 90 degrees with respect to a plane that is perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the outer key sleeve 52. Clearly the orientation of the sides of the vertical key reception slot do not permit the relationship of "rotating said upper sleeve member with respect to said lower sleeve member in a first direction engages said locking tab into said locking slot and rotating said upper sleeve member with respect to said lower sleeve member in a second direction disengages said locking tab from said locking slot". It is noted that in the Mozena structure, if even a corner of the tab is misaligned with the slot, the tab and the slot cannot be engaged.

It is therefore submitted that the cited publications, and especially the allegedly obvious combination of Edelen and Mozena set forth in the rejection of the Office Action, would not lead one skilled in the art to the applicant's invention as required by claims 1, 14, and 15.

Withdrawal of the §102(b) and §103(a) rejection of claims 1, 3 through 7, 10 through 12, 14 through 17, and 20 is therefore respectfully requested.

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CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing amendments and remarks, early reconsideration and allowance of this application are most courteously solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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By 

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